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REVIEWS

A GUIDE TO DRAMATIZATION¹

"All the classroom's a stage, and all its belongings, properties; Richard and Friar Tuck contentedly quaff canary from ink-wells; Gurth and the Miller have a bout with pointers as quarter staves; the seats on the middle aisle provide places for Prince John's banqueters, and . . . the teacher's platform . . . serves as the ruins of Torquilstone."² Thus interestingly does Miss Maude E. Williams insist upon the note of simplicity and lack of formality that ought to pervade all work in dramatization of elementary- and high-school pupils. Properly safeguarded against extravagance and pretentiousness, dramatization is indeed becoming recognized by English teachers as a "vitalizing device." It is largely in this spirit that the authors of *Dramatization* have presented their book.

Miss Simons and Mr. Orr frankly assert that their message is intended primarily for teachers, and that their book is not designed to be used as a text. Out of their experiments in the English classes in Washington, D.C., they have gathered together many suggestions that are helpful for teachers interested in the possibilities of dramatic adaptation and presentation. Of the two parts of the book, the first, Purpose and Method, is addressed especially to teachers. The second part of the book consists of dramatized selections from high-school classics. These are arranged in four groups, one suitable for each year of the course. Moreover, these separate groups of selections are published in pamphlet form by Scott, Foresman & Co. A teacher who desires to make use of the help offered may therefore use the complete book for reference and put copies of the pamphlets into the hands of the class as texts. The selections ready for use, with stage setting and costuming indicated, may be used by the pupils for dramatic reading; but they are designed chiefly to serve as models for similar adaptations of other classics. Selections are offered that show how interpolations and deviations from the original may be used when necessary to preserve the dramatic quality. In all, there are cuttings from twenty-two classics, including for the Freshman

¹ *Dramatization*. By SARAH E. SIMONS and CLEM IRWIN ORR. Chicago: Scott Foresman & Co., 1913.

² "The Dramatization of School Classics," *English Journal*, October, 1912, p. 479.

year the short story, the novel, the ballad, the epic, and the legend. Types for the other years are equally varied and representative.

The authors are to be commended for many helpful suggestions in the first part of the book. After a preliminary treatment of the value and the pedagogy of dramatization, there follows the chief contribution in the discussion of types of literature suitable for adaptation, as well as in the many concrete and practical suggestions about staging, costuming, lighting, etc. How to construct a fireplace on a high-school stage, how to make inexpensive wigs out of hemp rope, how to develop tableaux and moving pictures out of selections that do not admit of formal dramatization—these and many similar topics are treated. In fact, a teacher wholly inexperienced in directing informal dramatics can, by following the selections offered here, make her first attempt with confidence.

The authors of this pioneer in the field have presented so admirably so many phases of the topic, that we may regret they have omitted treatment of others which puzzle an inexperienced teacher. There is no doubt that the mechanics of such devices as the memorizing of parts, and the securing and putting together of costumes, even the most simple, require far more time than reading and discussing a classic. What place, then, can a teacher of English, who is advised to require sixteen books every year for regular class labors, give to dramatization?

Again, she is told to use either the classroom or the study hall, whichever is more suitable; but one asks if she would ever be justified in emptying the study hall to accommodate one class. (We take for granted that such work is to be done in school hours.) Moreover, if performances are to be presented in the classroom during the limited recitation period, must not such matters as costuming and staging be largely given up?

Three minor criticisms may be noted. First, the paging of the book, evidently arranged for convenience in the use of the text in connection with the pamphlets, is extremely confusing to one using the book as a whole. Second, certain selections given are not dramatic in quality. The "Tales of a Wayside Inn," for example, contains such long speeches that it is really a series of recitations with no opportunity for stage action. If it is the main purpose of dramatization to instil in the pupil a sense of what qualities are necessary to an essentially dramatic situation, then such selections are not consistently chosen. On the other hand, if the teacher conceives of dramatization as being simply a means of interpreting a story or creating an atmosphere, then any selection in which

characters speak and move may be used to advantage. Such, perhaps, is the conception of the authors of this book. Third, many of the selections that a teacher might choose for dramatization would be impossible except for interpolations and paraphrasings done supposedly by the class. The authors give many models of such passages excellently worked out by mature minds. The inexperienced teacher questions the advisability of encouraging the high-school student to weld his own stanzas into the "Idylls of the King," for example, or to attempt lines in harmony with Stevenson's dynamics. Would not such attempts fall woefully flat in presentation?

A GROUP OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF

ROLLO L. LYMAN

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE MACAULAY-LINCOLN REQUIREMENT¹

The "Riverside Literature Series" already includes five essays of Macaulay, and now the publishers have added the copyright speeches of 1841 and 1842, which, taken with Lincoln's Cooper Union speech, make an adequate substitute for Burke on *Conciliation*.

To be sure, it is surprising that fourth-year students should have any trouble with Burke, or that teachers should care to change for any reason but variety. But complaints are heard. In vain it is urged upon some teachers and students that for interest and organization Burke on *Conciliation with the American Colonies* is ideal reading for all descendants of the American colonists, and for their fellow-countrymen. But many a muddled young teacher and many a vague young student has been clarified by the discipline of this speech. They may call it a mountain, but as Vergil said to Dante, it is a mountain that straightens you.

The proposed substitutes have one advantage over Burke. As men, Macaulay and Lincoln are better worth studying. But these three speeches are not easier than the *Conciliation*. Indolent students will not like them better. The Macaulay selections call for more interest in literature and literary history than is easy to get nowadays. The Lincoln address is exacting in its demands upon the student of our early history. Macaulay taxes the memory; Lincoln taxes the reasoning

¹ *Macaulay's Speeches on Copyright; Lincoln's Address at Cooper Union*. Edited by EDWIN L. MILLER. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1913.